DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 045 313 RE 003 155

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TITLE Secondary Teachers Can Teach Reading.
PUB DATE May 70
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the convention of the International Reading Association, Anaheim, Cal., May 6-9, 1970

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.65
DESCRIPTORS *Basic Reading, English Programs, *High Schools, *Inservice Teacher Education, Program Evaluation, *Reading Difficulty, *Remedial Reading Programs, Tutoring, Video Tape Recordings

ABSTRACT

Three inservice teacher training projects in Los Angeles were described. The Saturation English-Reading In-Service Training Project was designed for English teachers who had received little or no previous training in the teaching of reading skills. Part of the training involved the making of lesson plans which could be used in the classroom. In the second project, Remedial Reading, a group of teachers was instructed in basic reading skills and diagnostic techniques. Pupils volunteered to be tutored by the participating teachers. The Reading Skills Instructional Program, the last of the three projects, was designed to provide instruction in reading skills for content-area teachers. Evaluation of the programs by the teachers involved reflected the general opinion that the programs were beneficial and gave hope for helping the disabled high school reader. (DH)

ED045313

SECONDARY TEACHERS CAN TEACH READING
(IN-SERVICE - TEACHING READING IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS)

A Brief Description of Three In-Service Projects

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In Nila Banton Smith's book, Reading Instruction for Today's Children, she states that

> "The United States Office of Education predicts that by 1970 (now) there will ..... 12,400,000 high school pupils, (a 47.5 per cent increase over the number in 1960..."[1]

With the influx of greater numbers of students from many backgrounds and the increasing mobility of the late 1960's, the need to do something more for the student who reached the secondary school without basic reading skills has become more acute with each passing year.

The question is not one of "Are we doing as well as we have in the past?" but rather, "Are we doing well enough in the preparation of today's youth to meet the demands of society?" Are those who come to our classrooms being taught the skills which will enable them to compete? Are they being taught to think? Are they being involved in what is being taught? Are they being taught to read? In this last query, the answer is "Apparently not -- at least in the case of most metropolitan areas."

Test scores of more recent years indicate that the goals set for our pupils are not being met. There are many reasons for this, but these reasons are not the subject under discussion in this paper. Let us assume that the problem exists, for it most certainly does. Let me say, further, that most of this problem should have been corrected at the elementary level. This is not to find fault with the elementary program, but rather to say that much additional help is necessary there. It seems more appropriate at this point to address ourselves to the problem at hand -- training secondary teachers

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Footnote 1 Nila Banton Smith, "Reading Instruction for Today's Children," Prentice-Hall, Inc., p.12

to teach reading at the secondary level. This is a most difficult task, for the secondary teacher historically has received no formal reading training. They think, in many cases, that reading refers to the study of literature at the secondary level, and further feel -- and this seems somewhat a popular concept -- that the job of teaching Johnny to read rests with elementary education.

Were we to agree with each of these points (and this certainly is not the case), we would still be faced with the dilemma of students at the secondary level in need of reading instruction. The problem of the child in Secondary who must read to be successful, but cannot, is a very real problem.

For some years, in Los Angeles, we have given numerous in-service projects of various lengths to provide teachers with some of the attitudinal and technical background to carry on this most necessary work. During the spring of 1968, we attempted a sizable effort to involve English teachers in an innovative in-service project.

THE SATURATION ENGLISH-READING IN-SERVICE TRAINING PROJECT

The relationship between the teaching of reading skills and the traditional role of the English teachers caused us to take a careful look at this point of empathy at the secondary level. While it is true that secondary teachers, English teachers included, receive little or no training in the teaching of reading skills during their training, it was felt that the English teacher probably indentifies with the need to teach reading skills more keenly than any other secondary teacher.

For this reason, a Saturation English-Reading In-Service Training Project was initiated in the spring of 1968. This invitational program was designed for English teachers who taught two or more classes of English in thirty-six of Los Angeles City's mid-city junior and senior high schools.

Leadership for the project was supplied by six junior high and six senior high teachers, recommended and sponsored by the English Supervisor and the Office of Special Programs in Education. They co-led and team-taught the sections. The major objects of the project included (1) investigating the reading process -- why students read or fail to read; (2) the improvement of reading skills instruction in English classes; and (3) demonstration and familiarization with techniques, materials, and methodologies which produce results.

Appropriate materials of instruction and equipment for demonstration were used to implement the project. In addition, secondary personnel, working directly with the project, included a reading specialist, an operations consultant coordinating the efforts of the six units, and a curriculum development consultant to aid in the construction, production, and evaluation of lesson plans and other materials useful in the teaching of reading skills.

The reading specialist and operations consultant structured the organization and sequence of the workshop meeting. They made visitations and participated in many of the critiques.

The project was organized into six sections, and scheduled meetings throughout the spring semester from February through the first week in May.

The first meeting involved an orientation to the reading process providing teachers with an opportunity to ask questions, and an application of reading skills instruction to the English class. This was done by demonstration of various instructional techniques. After this introduction, each three-hour session basically divided according to the following schedule.

One hour was given over to demonstration, lecture, and familiarization with material. A second hour was used to construct lesson plans, teaching materials, etc. The remaining hour involved participants in

discussing how the materials worked, what modifications were necessary, and an interchange of ideas between the participants.

An underlying concept inherent in this program was the idea that English teachers could -- with some instruction and direction -- write lesson plans involving the teaching of reading skills, try them in their classrooms, with modification as necessary, and experience firsthand the success of teaching reading skills incorporated in the English lesson plan. Project sessions were scheduled with two to three weeks between meetings to allow enough time for trial and experimentation.

In addition to more than 200 teachers, some 28 counselors also took part in this training program.

Evaluation of this project was conducted at its conclusion. Results included the following:

1. The participants of this project prepared many lesson plans which were demonstrated in project meetings. These were completed in a booklet titled, Educational Aids for Teaching Developmental Reading in the English Classroom.
2. The project contributed to teaching effectiveness and professional growth.
3. Participants wanted more training in the teaching of "basic skills."
4. Students should be invited to attend future projects to receive concentrated reading instruction and provide tutoring experience for participants.

CONCLUSION

The need to provide additional training in the teaching of reading for all teachers increased as each of the schools involved in the Saturation Program endeavored to establish school-wide reading programs. Evaluations

from the Saturation Project indicated a strong desire on the part of many teachers to be taught the actual procedures for teaching basic reading skills which might be applied in any class. To satisfy this need, projects in Remedial Reading instruction were held at five locations between June 17 and June 28 of 1968.

REMEDIAL READING PROJECTS

These projects were designed for teachers from any subject area field who had not previously attended a basic skills workshop in reading. Once again we invited teachers to attend and the 120 teachers who attended were taught the procedures for teaching basic reading skills, including word analysis, structured analysis, context clues, configuration, spelling, vocabulary building, comprehension, rate flexibility, and study skills. Diagnostic techniques and evaluative criteria were also included in this offering.

A unique feature of this project was an invitation to students to return to the school (this project was conducted during the two weeks following the close of school) to receive help in learning how to read better than before. Over 120 pupils accepted this invitation. This provided for a real remedial service to young people and supplied the much-needed and requested personnel to make tutoring sessions meaningful.

The pupils who returned to participate in these represented an unusual group in one respect. The majority were pupils who had not been successful in the school experiences just completed. On the contrary, several had just completed a failing effort, if one were to judge failure on the basis of report card grades. These pupils also had demonstrated irregular attendance habits over the semester just completed. And yet, not only did they come, but they came back session after session.

A second feature which provided additional dimension to our program was the loan of a video-tape unit, a van to transport it, and a student crew of five to provide the technical assistance to make it functional.

The van moved from one location to another during the ten days -- four hours per day instructional time - on a scheduled basis. It provided teachers, students, and leadership the opportunity of performing in a number of different situations and the chance to look at the situation, in review to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses.

It also provided an interesting side effect which warrants mention at this time. The student crew which operated our video unit developed an esprit de corps which would rival a professional T-V crew. Their willingness to work with the participants to get just the kind of situation desired on film and their efficiency added a definite plus to the total operation.

Thirty-five junior and eighteen senior high schools furnished 116 participants to the five remedial training units. Since the project was open to participants from any subject field, teachers from the subject fields of Art, Business Education, Counseling, Driver Education, English, Educable Mentally Retarded, Foreign Language, Home Economics, History, Mathematics, Music, English as a Second Language, Reading, Social Studies, and Special Education attended. Participants attended 10 meetings of four hours each during the final two weeks of June. Each section was led by a highly-trained leader selected by the Office of Special Programs of Education.

EVALUATION

Project objectives were evaluated by 103 of the 116 attending the project. The following information describes the participating population. As we looked at the teaching experience background of our participants, we found that they might be grouped as follows:

Thirty-four had three or fewer years of teaching experience. Twenty-six had between four and six years experience in the classroom. Fifteen teachers reported seven to ten years of experience. Sixteen teachers said they had taught between ten and twenty years. Two members of our groups indicated more than twenty years of experience. When asked to indicate to

what extent this project had helped them, eighty-five indicated that they had been significantly helped in the areas of teaching effectiveness and professional growth. Seventeen indicated that the help had been moderate and one participant indicated that the help had been negligible.

In answer to the question, "In what way was this project helpful?", some of the responses were as follows:

- The workshop gave me many ideas and suggestions for use of materials in teaching my EMR students.
- The leader thoroughly explained, demonstrated, and evaluated reading materials of which I had been hitherto uninformed.
- Whereas in many reading workshops in the past we have simply received a myriad of operational aids and lessons, here we received valuable information and practice (with tutorees) in actually teaching reading.
- As a counselor, I gained much insight as to what to expect in a reading class. It provided much opportunity for professional awareness.
- Working with individual students in a tutoring situation helped me develop a more personal understanding of the problem of remedial readers.

By using video tape, we were able to detect strengths and weaknesses in the methods used.

There were, of course, many other comments, all somewhat similar to those stated. It is hoped that these will give a feeling for the kind of responses received.

Our final evaluation question asked:
What suggestions for improving this type of project would you suggest?
Of the answers received, the following seem to be most representative:

- More extensive use of video tape, to observe ourselves and each other.
- Extend the time of the project (not enough time to really do the job.)
- More time to exchange ideas and materials.
- The only improvement I can think of is that it be given to a greater number of teachers in all content areas.

CONCLUSIONS

- The project met the specific objects of teaching the participants the procedures for basic skills instruction.
- A strong desire was voiced to continue projects of this type and structure.
- Participants found video taping of group discussions and tutoring a valuable aid in seeing and hearing those things which took place during the project.
- Participants from subject fields other than English indicated that knowledge gained was useful in their subjects.

THE READING SKILLS INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

The success of the Remedial Reading Project and interest of teachers prompted yet another attempt at the best possible structure for providing reading skills instruction for content area teachers. This took the form of the Reading Skills Instruction Program, which was held during May and June of 1969. Participants attended four project sessions on three consecutive Saturdays in May, followed by six days of intensive tutoring during the last week in June. All meetings were held during a four-hour time structure.

The structure differed from the workshops of the previous year in two important areas. First, it carried on over a period of two months

time and gave participants more opportunities to react to what was being presented and modify some of the ideas, techniques, and methodology presented to fit a particular situation. Secondly, although video tape had been used to a great extent in the prior offering, it was felt that the organization of this project, with particular reference to security, precluded its use.

The program also limited the attendance of participants to teachers from the four major content areas, English, Social Science, Mathematics, and Science.

The purpose of the program was threefold. We attempted to train teachers in the teaching of basic reading skills so they might better (1) improve pupil achievement in basic reading skills; (2) improve pupil study habits and study techniques; and (3) help pupils develop favorable attitudes toward school. It was planned to end just prior to the beginning of summer school. It was so constructed that many of the participants would teach summer school, and be able to practice immediately the techniques and methodology which they had acquired.

As had been true the previous year, the pupils were invited to come for the tutoring session. This time, in fact, we had more pupils than participants. The pupils benefited from the chance to work in one-to-one and small group situations with an adult who had the time to work with them and who knew how to go about it. Teachers benefited from being able to practice that which they had been taught, to immediately critique the experience and to receive guidance in the development of methodology and techniques used when working with problem readers.

EVALUATION

In an evaluation of the project, we found that much had been accomplished, and this was reflected in the replies of our participants to a questionnaire. In answer to the question, "In what way was this project most helpful," the following sampling of replies give interesting insight.

"Beyond understanding the dynamics of learning to read, materials, and games, it encouraged me in the sense that I met people who are making learning or education possible in what often seems an impossible situation in our inner-city schools."

"The magnitude of the reading problem in inner-city schools was stressed; and this helped me to realize how important it is to diagnose reading ability and teach accordingly."

"I learned the basics of phonics and got many ideas to use in my classroom. It was well planned and practical."

"This project helped me in finding ways to help the poor readers in social studies and showing me how to use phonics and other methods in teaching reading in social studies."

"I learned a teaching sequence for reading skills. Bravo for the leader! Good teachers are beautiful people."

CONCLUSION

It seems appropriate to reflect for just a moment or two on the basic or primary directions for the three in-service projects so briefly described. The purposes in all cases were to (1) provide secondary teachers instruction in teaching reading skills at the junior and senior high school levels; (2) familiarize teachers with techniques, methodology, and ideas regarding the teaching of these skills; (3) provide an opportunity for teachers to work with students (tutees are in the classroom); and (4) discuss, modify, and share the knowledge and information acquired.

There were no failures because teachers did feel rewarded by the response of pupils and the skill being learned. Whether we refer to the Saturation English-Reading In-Service Project, the Remedial Reading Project, or the Reading Skills Instructional Program, the same general statement could be made. Teachers and

students worked -- sometimes together, sometimes separately -- and learned about the reading process, about the skills involved in its mastery, and how, by working together, the task of teaching reading skills becomes easier for the teacher and more meaningful for individual students.